

Amendments to the Claims:

Please cancel claims 79-87.

Please amend claims 43, 46, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 65, 66, 70, 71, 74, 75, 76, 77 and 78.

Please add new claims 88-98.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1-42. (Cancelled).

43. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a rotatable tubular and a drilling fluid, comprising:

a marine riser [~~fixed to an ocean floor~~];

a housing disposed above a portion of the marine riser having a first housing opening and a second housing opening, both to communicate [a] the drilling fluid received from the marine riser;

an inner member rotatable relative to the housing and having a passage through which [a] the rotatable tubular may extend;

a pressure relief mechanism blocking one of the housing openings, the pressure relief mechanism adapted to open at a predetermined fluid pressure; and

a seal moving with the inner member to sealably engage the rotatable tubular.

44. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, wherein the pressure relief mechanism comprises:

a rupture disk blocking one of the housing openings to block fluid communication from the housing.

45. (Cancelled).

46. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a rotatable tubular, comprising:

a marine riser [~~positioned relative to a floor of an ocean~~];

an assembly removably disposed above a portion of the marine riser, the assembly comprising:

an inner member having a radially outward surface rotatable relative to the marine riser and the inner member having a passage through which [a] the rotatable tubular may extend;

a radially outwardly disposed outer member;

a plurality of bearings interposed between the radially outward surface of the inner member and the radially outwardly disposed outer member; and

a seal moving with the inner member to sealably engage the rotatable tubular; and

a housing, the assembly removably disposed within the housing.

47. (Cancelled).

48. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a drilling fluid, a marine riser and a tubular, comprising:

a housing adapted for positioning above a portion of [a] the marine riser, comprising:

a housing opening to discharge [a] the drilling fluid received from the marine riser,

an assembly removably positionable within the housing, comprising:

a sealing member, which rotates relative to the housing, and seals [a] the tubular [~~when the tubular is rotating~~]; and

a pressure relief mechanism blocking the housing opening, the pressure relief mechanism adapted to open at a predetermined fluid pressure.

49. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 48, further comprising:

a flexible conduit having a first end and a second end for communicating the drilling fluid from the housing opening.

50. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48, wherein the housing permits substantially full bore access to the marine riser.

51. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 48 further comprising an ocean surface, wherein a portion of the housing extends above ~~an~~ the ocean surface.

52. (Previously Amended) A method, comprising:
positioning a marine riser relative to an ocean floor;
disposing a housing above a portion of the marine riser;
rotatably sealing a rotatable tubular to the housing; and
pressurizing a drilling fluid in the marine riser, comprising:
blocking an opening in the housing to block fluid communication from the housing; and
clearing the opening at a predetermined pressure of the drilling fluid.

53. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 52, wherein the step of disposing a housing above a portion of the marine riser comprising:
receiving the drilling fluid from the marine riser through an opening in the housing.

54. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, further comprising the steps of:
~~[discharging the drilling fluid from the opening; and]~~
connecting a flexible conduit to the opening; and
discharging the drilling fluid through the flexible conduit.

55. (Cancelled).

56. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 52, wherein the step of rotatably sealing a rotatable tubular to the housing comprising:
rotating an inner member relative to the housing; and
sealing the inner member to the rotatable tubular.

57. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 52, wherein the step of rotatably sealing a rotatable tubular to the housing comprising:

removably positioning an assembly within the housing, a portion of the assembly rotatable relative to the housing; and
sealing the rotatable tubular to the portion of the assembly.

58. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 57, further comprising the steps of:
unsealing the rotatable tubular from the portion of the assembly; and
removing the assembly from the housing,
wherein the housing remains disposed above the portion of the marine riser.

59. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 52, wherein the step of disposing a housing above a portion of the marine riser comprising:

positioning a portion of the housing above an ocean surface.

60. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 52, wherein the step of positioning a marine riser relative to an ocean floor comprising:

fixing the marine riser to the ocean floor.

61. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, further comprising:
a flexible conduit for communicating the drilling fluid from at least one of the housing openings.

62-63. (Cancelled).

64. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, wherein the housing permits substantially full bore access to the marine riser.

65. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 43, the pressure relief mechanism further comprising:

a connector, attachable to one of the housing openings, comprising:

a pressure relief mechanism blocking connector[, ~~the pressure relief mechanism blocking connector~~] adapted to open at a predetermined fluid pressure.

66. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 65, the connector further comprising:
a valve[;] adapted to shut off fluid flow from the connector.

67. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 66, wherein the valve is remotely operable.

68. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 65, further comprising:
a flexible conduit, attachable to the connector, for communicating the drilling fluid from the marine riser.

69. (Cancelled).

70. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 48, further comprising:
a connector, attachable to the housing opening[, ~~wherein the connector is erosion resistant~~].

71. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 70, [~~the connector~~] further comprising: a valve for closing the connector.

72. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 71, wherein the valve is remotely operable.

73. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 70, the connector comprising:
a rupture disk configured to rupture at a predetermined fluid pressure.

74. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 49, wherein [a] the first end of the flexible conduit is attached to the housing, and wherein the flexible conduit compensates for relative movement between the housing and [a] the second end of the flexible conduit.

75. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a drilling fluid and a rotatable tubular, comprising:

a marine riser [~~fixed to an ocean floor~~];

a housing disposed above a portion of the marine riser having a first housing opening and a second housing opening, both to communicate [a] the drilling fluid received from the marine riser;

an inner member rotatable relative to the housing and having a passage through which [a] the rotatable tubular may extend;

a rupture disk blocking one of the housing openings to block fluid communication from the housing; and

a seal moving with the inner member to sealably engage the rotatable tubular.

76. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a drilling fluid and a rotatable tubular, comprising:

a marine riser [~~fixed to an ocean floor~~];

a housing disposed above a portion of the marine riser having a first housing opening and a second housing opening, both to communicate [a] the drilling fluid received from the marine riser;

an inner member rotatable relative to the housing and having a passage through which [a] the rotatable tubular may extend;

a connector, attachable to one of the housing openings, comprising:

a pressure relief mechanism blocking connector, the pressure relief mechanism blocking connector adapted to open at a predetermined fluid pressure;

and

a seal moving with the inner member to sealably engage the rotatable tubular.

77. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a marine riser, a drilling fluid and a tubular, comprising:

a housing adapted for positioning above a portion of [a] the marine riser, comprising:

a housing opening to discharge [a] the drilling fluid received from the marine riser,

an assembly removably positionable within the housing, comprising:

a sealing member, which rotates relative to the housing, and seals [a] the tubular [~~when the tubular is rotating~~]; and

a [~~an erosion-resistant~~] connector, attachable to the housing opening, comprising:

a rupture disk configured to rupture at a predetermined fluid pressure.

78. (Currently Amended) A system adapted for use with a marine riser, a drilling fluid and a tubular, comprising:

a housing adapted for positioning above a portion of [a] the marine riser, comprising:

a housing opening to discharge [a] the drilling fluid received from the marine riser,

a pressure relief mechanism in fluid communication with the housing opening,

an assembly removably positionable within the housing, comprising:

a sealing member, which rotates relative to the housing, and seals [a] the tubular [~~when the tubular is rotating~~],

[~~wherein a portion of the housing extends above an ocean surface,~~]

wherein the sealing member seals the tubular [~~while drilling~~].

79-87. (Cancelled)

88. (New) The system of claim 78, wherein the pressure relief mechanism is movable between a blocking position to block the flow of the drilling fluid and an open position to open at a predetermined fluid pressure to allow flow of the drilling fluid.

89. (New) A system adapted for use with a rotatable tubular, comprising:
a marine riser for use with the rotatable tubular;
an assembly removably disposed above a portion of the marine riser, the assembly comprising:
an inner member rotatable relative to the marine riser and having a passage through which the rotatable tubular may extend;
a radially outwardly disposed outer member;
a plurality of bearings interposed between the inner member and the radially outwardly disposed outer member; and
a seal moving with the inner member to sealably engage the tubular; and
a housing, the assembly removably disposed within the housing without any of the bearings being in contact with the housing.

90. (New) A system adapted for use with a marine riser, a drilling fluid and a tubular, comprising:
a housing adapted for positioning above a portion of the marine riser, comprising:
a housing opening to discharge the drilling fluid received from the marine riser,
a connector in fluid communication with the housing opening,
an assembly removably positionable within the housing, comprising:
a sealing member, which rotates relative to the housing, and seals the tubular.

91. (New) The system of claim 90, wherein the connector comprises a valve.

92. (New) A system adapted for use with a structure for drilling in a floor of an ocean using a riser, a tubular and a drilling fluid when the structure is floating on a surface of the ocean, the system comprising:

an assembly adapted for removable positioning above a portion of the riser and having an inner member, a radially outwardly disposed outer member, and a plurality of bearings, wherein

the inner member is rotatable relative to the riser and has a passage through which the tubular may extend, and

the plurality of bearings are interposed between the inner member and the radially outwardly disposed outer member;

a seal moving with the inner member to sealably engage the tubular; and

the floating structure movable independent of the assembly.

93. (New) Apparatus for communicating a drilling fluid from a riser having an axis and fixed relative to an ocean floor to a structure floating at a surface of the ocean, comprising:

means for moving the drilling fluid from the riser adjacent a first level of the floating structure to a second level of the floating structure above said first level, the moving means being able to compensate for relative movement between the structure and the riser so as to allow the floating structure to move independent of the riser;

wherein a seal is substantially axially aligned with said riser axis, and

said seal is arranged to seal with the tubular while the tubular is moved along an axial direction.

94. (New) A method of communicating a drilling fluid from a riser having an axis and fixed relative to an ocean floor to a structure floating at a surface of the ocean, comprising the steps of:

allowing the floating structure to move independent of said riser;

moving the drilling fluid from the riser adjacent a first level of the floating structure to a second level of the floating structure above said first level;

wherein a seal is substantially axially aligned with said riser axis, and

said seal seals with the tubular while the tubular is moved along an axial direction.

95. (New) Apparatus for use with a structure for drilling in a floor of an ocean using a rotatable tubular and drilling fluid when the structure is floating at a surface of the ocean, comprising:

a riser;

a housing disposed above a portion of said riser, the housing having a first housing opening;

an assembly having an inner member, the inner member rotatable relative to the housing and having a passage through which the rotatable tubular may extend;

a seal movable with the inner member to sealably engage the tubular; and

a flexible conduit for communicating the drilling fluid between the first housing opening and the structure whereby the structure is movable independent of the housing when the tubular is rotating.

96. (New) Apparatus for use with a structure for drilling in a floor of an ocean using a rotatable tubular and drilling fluid when the structure is floating at a surface of the ocean, comprising:

a riser;

means for sealing the tubular with respect to the riser; and

a flexible conduit for communicating the drilling fluid between the riser and the structure so as to compensate for relative movement of the structure and the riser when the floating structure is allowed to move independent of the riser.

97. (New) A method of sealing a riser having an axis while drilling in a floor of an ocean from a structure floating at a surface of the ocean using a rotatable tubular and drilling fluid, comprising the steps of:

sealing the tubular with respect to the riser;

allowing the floating structure to move independent of the riser; and

communicating the drilling fluid between the riser and the structure, using a flexible conduit, so as to compensate for relative movement of the structure and the riser.

98. (New) Apparatus for use with a structure for drilling in the floor of an ocean using a rotatable tubular and drilling fluid when the structure is floating at a surface of the ocean, comprising:

a riser fixable relative to the floor of the ocean, a portion of said riser extendable between the floor of the ocean and the surface of the ocean, said riser having a top, bottom and an internal diameter;

a housing disposed on the top of said riser, said housing having a first housing opening and an internal diameter, said first housing opening being sized to discharge drilling fluid received from said riser;

a bearing assembly having an inner member and an outer member and being removable positioned with said housing, said inner member being rotatable relative to said outer member and having a passage through which the rotatable tubular may extend;

a seal movable with said inner member to sealably engage the tubular;

a quick disconnect member to disconnect said bearing assembly from said housing; wherein

the floating structure is movable independently of said bearing assembly when said tubular is sealed by said seal and the tubular is rotating.